Informer: Sex and the Klan

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Gary Rowe, who infiltrated the Ku Klux Klan for the FBI, appeared in a white hood yesterday before the Senate intelligence committee and testified that the bureau instructed him to sleep with the wives of as many Klansmen as he could to get information and sow dissension in the Klan's klaverns.

He also told the committee that his FBI superiors failed to use intelligence he provided to prevent the beating of the Freedom Riders in Birmingham during 1961 civil rights demonstrations.

FBI officials denied that Rowe had been given instructions to involve himself sexually with the wives of Klansmen or to find out, as he alleged he was instructed, about their sex lives.

Ten years ago Rowe's testimony helped to convict three Klansmen in the murder of Detroit civil rights activist Violet Liuzzo, who was murdered by a shotgun blast in Alabama on March 25, 1965. The federal charge under which they were tried was depriving Mrs. Liuzzo of her civil rights.

Rowe insisted on wearing the hood, with its goggle-sized eyeholes, to protect his new identity as a private investigator on the West Coast. Rowe has adopted a new name as part of the disguise with which he is seeking to protect himself from reprisal for his informing for the FBI during 1959-1965.

Co-starring with Rowe during yesterday's hearing on the FBI informer system was Mary Jo Cook, who infiltrated the Vietnam Veterans Against the War chapter in Buffalo, N.Y., to serve—as she was told by her FBI handlers—as a "big sister" to emotionally unstable Vietnam veterans.

"It was more exciting working as an informant than working as a teller in a bank," Cook testified in explaining her affiliation with the FBI.

Eventually it was Cook who soured on her role as an in-

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former. She testified on behalf of the inmates in the Attica trials. She resigned as an FBI informer in November, 1974. And by the time she was ready for her debut as a senatorial witness yesterday she had this to say of the veterans, against whom the FBI paid her some $5,000 to snoop:

"In a genocidal war which deprived them of heroism with honor, they came to grips with the inherent fascism of a war of containment which would subject a civilian populace of color to years of death and terror—all in the name of democracy."

Both Rowe and Cook are by now veteran witnesses— she in the Attica case and he in the Liuzzo trial. Very little of the testimony was new but, unlike the previous recountings of their roles, yesterday's recital was recorded by network television for the evening news shows.

The object of yesterday's hearing was to help Congress produce new guidelines governing FBI domestic intelligence activities. Most of those who appeared in the traditional inquisitional chamber of the Senate Caucus Room yesterday—FBI officials, senators and witnesses— agreed that the bureau had erred in the past and that new rules were necessary.

But bureau witnesses objected to a proposal to require a warrant for the use of informers against organizations such as the Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

"Such a limitation might be unconstitutional because it would limit the First Amendment rights of the informants to communicate with the government," the bureau contended in a written statement to the committee.